

喬林 知
松本テマリ

真魔国 王立研究室／編

Maru-ma Series
Official Fan Book

2 本



高林 知
松本テマ！」

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Maru-ma Series
Official Fan Book

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Kyou Kara Maou - Mini-Novels - MA-Hon

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Getting to Know Shin Makoku by Walking Through a Ma!Town

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The paper that gazes into the future of the demons and brings you the latest news in the kingdom, The Daily Demon

The Budding Popularity of the Magic-Powered Unidentified Flying Object Capturing Machine

New Machines Installed in Every Territory!!

(今号のみ地球西暦採用)

2010年(平成22年)

4月24日

眞魔国日報

号外



▲開発者のアニシナ女史
「わたくしの手にかかるば、この程度の魔動装置は朝飯前どころか夕飯直後の間食に過ぎません!」観光娯楽財源の掘り起こしに力を入れるフンカーベルニコフ家では、息女である同女史の遊具系魔動装置の新作開発に期待を寄せている。

●PR●
泣く子も黙る《寝る寝る子供》の新作はこれだ!

◆毒女対具・上樽◆
恐怖と戦慄の最終戦争勃発!!
発売と同時に早くも舞台化決定!!
永遠の被害者・上樽の逆襲がついに始まる!?

魔族の明日を見つめる国内最速情報紙 シンジケート

魔動未確認飛行物体捕獲機

珍獸愛好家の評判も上々



以前から一部事情通の間で話題となっていた最新娯楽装置「魔動未確認飛行物体捕獲機」(通称「ゆーふおりき」)が、ついに眞魔国内で解禁となった。この魔動装置はユーリ陛下の故郷の娯楽設備を参考にしたもので、巨大な硝子壺の中に詰まつた景品を、上から可動式の「腕」と呼ばれる操作棒で捕獲するというも。試作品では「消費魔力が大きすぎて時折暴走する」「魔力の微弱な国民、また魔力の抑制が苦手な未成年には操作が難しい等の欠点が指摘されていたが、尊い犠牲(グウェンタル閣下と王佐の被害が顕著)の献身的なもにあ参加の甲斐あって、前述の欠点を解消。先日発売の量産型筐体では出力を均等化し、余剩魔力は筐体内部に蓄積、少ない魔力でも快適な操作が可能となり、眞魔国史上最強の「ええじゃないかこれまで」(略して「えこと」)製品と

の呼び声も多い。ちなみに全国展開第1弾として、国民好感度の高い珍獸・クマハチのぬいぐるみが商品化されたが、この製品がやつちやー」または「謎の捕手」が、ついに眞魔国内で解禁となった。この魔動装置はユーリ陛下の故郷の娯楽設備を参考にしたもので、巨大な硝子壺の中に詰まつた景品を、上から可動式の「腕」と呼ばれる操作棒で捕獲するというも。試作品では「消費魔力が大きすぎて時折暴走する」「魔力の微弱な国民、また魔力の抑制が苦手な未成年には操作が難しい等の欠点が指摘されていたが、尊い犠牲(グウェンタル閣下と王佐の被害が顕著)の献身的なもにあ参加の甲斐あって、前述の欠点を解消。先日発売の量産型筐体では出力を均等化し、余剩魔力は筐体内部に蓄積、少ない魔力でも快適な操作が可能となり、眞魔国史上最強の「ええじゃないかこれまで」(略して「えこと」)製品と

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Inventor, Lady Anissina

"In my hands, a magic device of this level would be finished not only before breakfast, but before dessert after dinner!" Working towards reclaiming finances through tourism, the von Karbelnikoff family has placed their hopes in their daughter's newly-developed, recreational magic device.

Also Popular Amongst Rare Animal Lovers[edit]

The ban on the latest amusement device, The Magic-Powered Unidentified Flying Object Capturing Machine (aka, ‘UFO Catcher’ or ‘Mysterious Catcher’), which has been widely talked about amongst informed circles has been lifted within The Great Demon Kingdom.

This magic-powered device was designed based upon an amusement device from His Majesty Yuuri’s birthplace and is a glass container in which prizes are packed into and a mobile construct called an ‘arm’ captures them via a joystick. The prototype had numerous flaws such as ‘the magic consumption of the device is so high that sometimes it goes on a rampage’ and ‘citizens whose magic power is weak and those who are underage and have not learned to properly control their magic may have problems using the device,’ however the noble sacrifices (the injuries of His Excellency Gwendal and the Royal Advisor are obvious) of the devoted ‘monitor’ were worthwhile and the above flaws were removed. The production models that went on sale a few days ago have had their output equalized and the surplus magic power is stored inside the casing so it is now possible to easily operate it with little magic power and it has been hailed as the first ‘Great work, end result’s good enough’ (abbr. ‘green’) product in The Great Demon Kingdom’s History^[1].

Incidentally, in the first wave of the kingdom-wide expansion, stuffed animals of the rare bearbees popular amongst the citizens were commercialized, but this device will surely bring a smile to the faces of even the hardest to please of rare animal lovers. The limited edition Demon King version bearbees are out of stock in every territory and are immensely popular. In addition, the second wave of stuffed animal prizes will be sand bears and the third wave will be Hell’s Paradise Goalas.

After the excellent reception of the devices, His Majesty Yuuri, the one who originally proposed the idea, said “Well, they’re fairly standard in Japanese arcades. I didn’t think that they would be so popular,” and then continued while embarrassed added, “If you get into these it’s really easy to forget the time so be careful not to use up your money and magic power. Little children especially should be watched by their guardians. Game saves are important and your

health comes before everything, after all” as he worried for the health of the citizens.

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Poison Lady VS Gwe Dal

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Will the eternal victim Dal's counterattack finally begin!?

Secretly setting out into the castle town, the Demon King Yuuri is...?

魔王ユーリは……?
お忍びで城下町へ繰り出した



Special Report: Getting to Know The Great Demon Kingdom by Walking Through a Ma!Town[edit]

It was because I still hadn't fulfilled the promise of 'Let's sneak out of the

castle and have fun together again when the weather is nice.'

I put some small change in my pocket and instead of food... in other words, snacks and drinks, I tossed scarves for if it got cold and rain gear just in case into the carrier at my feet.

If we got hungry or thirsty we could just buy something at a shop nearby.

We weren't going that far.

It was just a stroll; an outing starting at noon that we would be back from by this evening.

"Today, I'm the driver, steering wheel, and engine so you only have to keep quiet and come along for the ride."

Even though I said 'driver' it's not a carriage or a car but just a wheelchair specially made by Miss Anissina that you push as you walk. The Poison Lady puts effort into caring for the elderly as well and since this is a wheelchair made-to-order, it's much more stable and easy to maneuver than the regular chairs with wheels put on them so far.

Even if the person is sleeping, you could move them without waking them.

"The weather's really nice. All the flowers might think it's the wrong season and bloom," I say to the person sitting in front of me but there is no answer. On the contrary, I don't even know if he can hear me. He didn't speak or even nod, but his orange hair swayed slightly in the gentle breeze. "Shall we go out the back gate, Josak? If we leave from the front gate, it won't really be sneaking out, after all."

I grasped the U-shaped handles and slowly pushed the wheelchair – in a way that wouldn't shake him much because I can't wake him up forcefully. But, I want him to hear my voice so I keep talking even though there is no response.

Passing through a side gate much smaller than the main gate, we go down a gentle slope. Carriages also use this road so there aren't any bumps or potholes to give us trouble.

Blood Pledge Castle is protected by mountains behind it and was built in an

elevated position that looks down upon the town. Because of that, this gentle slope continues on for a while. There aren't any general stores in this area yet and it has become the place where those who work inside the castle as well as soldiers who own houses and have families live.

Small children done with their short naps come running out of every house.

Avoiding bumping into soldiers who were off duty or returning from missions, the adults move out of their way to an exaggerated degree.

Several soldiers notice us.

Thinking I was in the middle of relocating an injured soldier, a young man who only looked a few years older than me gives a pitying look. Also, several soldiers who knew the lord of the castle loved going out are surprised for a moment when they see us, but when their gaze shifts behind us comprehension dawns on them and they move on after a small nod.

There are probably, no, definitely two or three guards following us. Conrad has his own circumstances, but the employed guards are all excellent and they are good at tailing us like veteran detectives. Even if I turn around a few times, I couldn't even see a shadow.

But anyway, why do they know it's me? I've covered my eyes and hair with light-colored contact lenses and a long hood.

The next middle aged soldier who came walking in our direction seemed to be an acquaintance of Josak's. He's surprised after seeing the wheelchair and he turns to question me who was pushing it.

"What happened to Mr. Gurrier!?"

I had prepared an answer beforehand.

"Shh! Quiet. It's an experiment."

His face immediately turned downcast in an expression that said 'that's too bad.'

"Ah... the Poison Lady's..."

"That's right. We're studying what sort of dreams he'll see if he's moved while he's sleeping."

"I see, then can you tell him when he wakes up that the man from the Anti-Female-Escorts says hi?" The man asked me as he scratched his head with a complicated expression. "Tell him to stop by the Female Prohibition Act Abolishment Memorial."

"Okay, I'll tell him."

"Thanks. Well then I'll be off, Mr. Gurrier."

Conscientiously saying farewell to my sleeping companion as well, he reluctantly walked away. For some reason, he had a nice scent similar to lilies.

Anti-Female-Escorts... what sort of group were they? Lord von Voltaire has been drilling information about domestic events into me, but I have never heard of a ceremony called the Female Prohibition Act Abolishment Memorial.

"You know, for some reason it seems like something restricted to people 18 or older."

I'd have no way of knowing about the anniversary of the abolishment of a ridiculous law against men dressing up in women's clothing.

I saw an out of breath man climbing the hill as I slowly kept moving down the path taking care not to let the wheels get away from me on the gentle slope. Both of his arms were filled with packages. There were four bags that looked like they were the size of a child. Maybe it's food for his family.

He was a familiar baldy, er, shiny skinhead with a long name you couldn't just carelessly call out: Lilit Latchie Iforgotthemiddle Dacascos. The man whose head got shinier the closer he got was flustered when he saw us. He literally paled. It seems like he's really astonished that the two of us are alone.

"Your M-..."

About to use my title to call out to me, he hurriedly covered mouth, or rather tried to as he couldn't use his hands and he ended up stuffing a long loaf of bread into his mouth.

"Are you on a 'alk?"

"Yeah, the usual escape."

"I see. Um, ah, you know, if you want I could accompany you."

There are drops of sweat forming on the part of his head where it's hard to tell whether it's forehead or scalp. Apparently he's worrying in his own way about the dangers of the castle lord walking around.

"People are following me out of sight so it's okay."

"Oh, that's right! Yeah, that makes sense. So..." Dacascos stole a fleeting glance at the wheelchair's passenger and his voice turns into a pitying tone. "Mr. Josak is the same as ever, huh."

He knows precisely what happened in our kingdom. Luckily or unluckily, he stood witness in a lot of different places so he ended up fairly knowledgeable. Therefore, he had a general understanding of what happened to Josak Gurrier and what his current condition is. That being said, contrary to his unreliable appearance, I can trust Dacascos's discretion. That's why Günter and Gisela trust him and keep him close. As long as he wasn't captured and tortured, there was no fear of him leaking any secrets.

"Uh yeah, the same as always. It's okay though, when he's sick of sleeping he'll definitely wake up."

"Yeah. That's right, Your-... you two, if you're going into town take a right at that intersection and turn west and there will be a relaxing street lined with trees with pink flowers. About half of the flowers are in bloom and now is the prettiest they'll be."

"Really, then we'll pass by there."

Parting ways with Dacascos on his way to the castle with his huge load, I turn right as instructed. The brand-new wheelchair makes the curve smoothly.

The tree-lined road with blooming flowers was different than the slope from before and not paved in smooth stone. It wasn't very wide either, but the ground had been packed down over time by foot traffic and it was good enough for the wheelchair to go through.

The petals of the flowers that bloomed early were beginning to fall and were dancing in the wind like pink snow.

"It's incredibly beautiful, Gurrier^[2]."

'Honestly, Young Master, I am much more beautiful.'

Even if I waited for a response like that, I can't get it yet.

A thirty-minute walk away from the castle apparently there is an area where artisans live. There are a lot of houses and workshops sharing the same roof. The atmosphere and energy was similar to streets lined with backstreet workshops in Japan. It's past noon and they're in the middle of work so there are various noises coming from the houses here and there.

"There are even a bunch of signs."

There were signs made out of hardened metal hanging from the eaves or fancy writing on wooden doorplates on each house. There was a horse head made out of iron, a dog carved out of copper that had rusted green, and a thick board with a hole drilled out in the middle where a blue bird was spinning by some mechanism.

There were craftsmen in each workshop facing the street and they were all passionately going about their work. About halfway through the artisan town, a woman with a sturdy physique had brought a chair out to the front of the house and was carefully polishing a small object. Catching the sunlight from the south, it was sparkling in her hands.

While I was absentmindedly gazing at it wondering what it was, the woman noticed the suspicious pair and beckoned to us with her hand.

"You guys, this isn't anything weird. It's a flute. You don't need to look so confused."

"Did we look that confused?"

"You did! Honestly, it's not like the craftsmen here only make swords and horseshoes."

The woman stood up and laughed with a slouched over posture and lead us a short ways away from the building. There were rhythmical sounds of pounding metal coming from inside the workshop.

"We're a subcontractor for the Queen's conceptual products. This is called 'Faithful Dog Dachiko.'" She showed me a silver pipe of a size that would fit in a

child's hand. "It's a flute used for when dogs don't listen to their owners. No matter how unruly the dog, with one blow on this Dachiko they'll go belly up like a turtle and calm down. It's true. I tried it on my husband [3]."

"Even if you tried it, your husband isn't a dog."

"But it's true. When I blew on this flute my husband rolled around on the floor holding his sides. Although, that might have been because the trout I fed him at dinner was bad."

I wonder what the Poison Lady would say if the rival of her magic-powered device was a trout.

"They say it works on wolves too, but not as well as on dogs. If so, then it would be handy for travellers and solders."

I can't help feeling that it would be handy for thieves as well, but there's no point in having an opinion on Poison Lady brand products. If you have faith and use it, it will definitely be useful. That's the concept behind the Queen's creations.

"If you want, take one."

"Eh, no I couldn't."

"It's fine, it's fine. It's only one. I mean," the woman starts as turns around and points to the workshop with her chin. There are flutes tightly packed into a wooden box. "There's enough to sell! If you blow on this it will work on your, well, your sleeping husband too."

She put her hands on her hips and bent over slightly, narrowing her eyes as Josak. It seems like she's been curious about him.

"His eyes might just snap right open, you know?"

Thinking that would be nice if they did, I blew into the silver flute she gave me.

Whoosh.

".... Huh?"

The air I breathed in just flowed out and it was anything but an alarm clock. It didn't make a sound. Instead, a dog nearby fell over. It has an entranced

expression with its tongue hanging out and its front legs are swaying as it lies on its back with its stomach exposed. Looks like it has a huge effect on dogs.

"Well, the weather is nice. It's no wonder he'd want to sleep."

After leaving the artisan town and walking a bit, the surroundings started to liven up.

The people going back and forth are walking faster and there are more conversations. We were coming near the shopping district.

The first floor of all the buildings facing the street were being used for shops and the second floors might be used for living because there were children peeking out and flowers decorating the windows.

The street was paved with flagstone and it became a little difficult to push the wheelchair. That being said, it was a major street that tourist carriages used so if I put in a little strength the chair could move forward without being shaken so much. It's because the wheels were made out of an elastic material instead of wood.

The shop on the first corner was a shop with many shelves lined up with plates and glasses on display. All the products had intertwined plants painted on them with indigo lines. They might be brand-name tableware.

The line of stores after that was varied.

There was a store with multi-colored bundles of fabric, a store with countless numbers of sparkling beads or marbles laid out and in the building next to that was a middle-aged man holding up a string against a customer like measuring tape. He might be taking measurements for tailor-made clothing.

Continuing on, there was even a toy-zone with a store with only white-faced, long-haired dolls on display and a store that dealt with balls, building blocks and model ships. After that was a food area. There were shops who extended their sales area out into the street to peddle their fruits and vegetables and butchers who had animal bones hanging out front.

"But apparently it's cheaper to buy vegetables in the market over there. Did you know that, Gurrier? I guess it's obvious you would know... whoa!"

I was suddenly pulled forward with a strong force and I reflexively jumped.

“Gurrier!?”

I bend forward and peer into his face. However, Josak’s eyelids are still closed and I can’t see his bright blue eyes.

“Huh.”

After I calm myself down and check again, I realize it was because the hem of my long jacket got caught in the wheel of the chair. I had arbitrarily jumped to the conclusion that he had woken up and grabbed my clothes.

I would have been so happy if that were the case.

“That’s dangerous. I’ll have to tell Miss Anissina. If a child was pushing this and the clothes were showier they might get hurt. That’s a place for improvement, right?”

There’s no answer of course. However, based on the faint air hitting my cheek, he’s definitely breathing.

“... Just that much is fine.”

Just you being alive is fine.

Disentangling the cloth and resuming my grip on the handles, I once again began to push the wheelchair forward. We move slowly across the pavement. Turning right at a shop that looked like a bakery, we went off the main street into an alley.

The width of the street narrowed significantly but not enough to feel claustrophobic. A horse could get through but not a carriage – it was that size. The houses were bearing the full brunt of the afternoon sun and even the stone walls seemed warm.

A child around eight years old was sitting on the ground with his back against that warm, white wall. He was facing downward and enthusiastically drawing a picture.

He looked eight, but who knows how old he really was. There are discrepancies even amongst demons and I feel like I’ve heard that growth in childhood is different for everyone.

But anyway, for a small child he was skillfully using a plank on top of his folded knees in place of a drawing board. Next to his feet were a glass bottle with water and a plate with paint on it.

In order to not knock over the water with the wheels, I stopped the wheelchair a distance away and questioned the boy facing his paper.

“What are you drawing?”

“A barrel!” he answered without looking up. All things considered, a barrel? For a child, his drawing’s theme was dull. “It’s homework. At school, the drawing teacher came. The music teacher came too. He’s the same person, though. He’s weird.”

“Weird? How is he weird?”

Honestly, it seems like there are a lot of weirdo teachers of the arts in both worlds. The boy finally looked up at me. He had completely straight bangs and his eyebrows were so blonde they didn’t stand out.

“He’s naked.”

“Naked!?”

Whoa, whoa, what’s up with that? A naked art teacher in an elementary school? Is he being the model as well?

“Yeah, he doesn’t wear a shirt. He has a butterfly on his neck. And the art teacher is even stronger than the gym teacher.”

Ah, those types. I know a little about those sort of artists.

“By any chance does he also teach you how to sing and dance?”

“You’re smart! He also teaches us music and dance. And yesterday, he gave everyone three colors of paint. He said to make a picture with them by next class. He didn’t have that much so everyone could only get three. Here, these are mine.”

After saying that, the boy shows me the two-centimeter dollops of paint squeezed out on the plate doubling as a palette. Pink, orange, navy blue. For an amateur like me, it’s really a difficult combination to work with.

"What are you supposed to draw with this color sche... that's a barrel!?"

But he ignored my outburst, stuck three fingers into the watered down navy blue and was boldly painting the sky. It was a bold technique of economizing his color usage that even famous artists would bow their head to. He stuck his index finger into the water and watered down the navy blue even more. The sky of a cloudless day was painted.

Suddenly turning his face in my direction, the boy stares at me and the wheelchair under my arm.

"Is that guy asleep?"

"Ah, yeah, he is."

"Hmm. My dad is like that too. He goes to sleep right after he eats."

Seems like he had no intention of asking why Josak was sleeping. He's probably used to seeing his father fall asleep on the couch after he drank at dinner.

Abruptly the boy pulls out the drawing paper that was his homework and replaces it with a new sheet of paper. Then, he asks us, "Want me to draw you?"

"What? Um, me?"

"The both of you."

The boy who seems to have suddenly grown interested in painting portraits after our exchange shakes his indigo-stained fingers.

"There's a picture of my family at home. Dad and mom and me and my little brother. It's there, on the wall. When I look at that I always think that if I learn how to draw in school I'll definitely draw like that. So, I'll draw one for you. I learned in school so I can draw like that."

"I see, then I'd love that. Do I just have to stay still?"

"Yeah."

The boys eyes were so bright I decided to have our impromptu portrait done by this amateur painter who just learned how to draw yesterday. With my hands gripping the handles, I move to the side a bit and stand next to Josak.

"Hey." I suddenly have an idea and open my mouth to stop the boy. "If you

can, only if you can, could you draw him awake?"

"Awake? The sleeping guy? Okay. What color are his eyes?"

"Blue. Yeah, like the color of that sky you painted."

"Okay."

The finished product couldn't be called good by any standard. However, when I look at the watercolor painting handed to me my cheeks unintentionally relax.

"... Hm."

The head of the man in the chair was strangely large and looked like an alien. I know it's Josak by the orange hair. The open eyes stood out and were a little creepy. On the other hand, the man standing next to him faded into the background and looked like an extra with a hood low over his eyes.

"But, this is a lot better than being made into a tanuki. This is rather realistic and they look like people. And..."

"I drew him awake!" The up-and-coming painter puffed out his chest.

"That's right. Thank you."

That's what I wanted to see.

The boy said I could have it, but for him it's his first portrait that he should remember so I felt awkward taking it for free. That being said, I didn't think I should buy it from him. So, we decided to trade the things we had. A picture just painted for the silver flute in my pocket. He immediately tried to play it, but he seemed disappointed that all that happened was his breath passed through it. Nevertheless, he said 'It's pretty so that's okay' and was pleased.

Sticking the rolled up drawing in my breast pocket, I push the wheelchair forward yet again. The sun had lowered a bit and was yellower than at noon.

According to the map I looked at before I left, there's a small residential area past here and if we go through there, there is a church and a square and a

historical tower with a shady past where a king a few generations ago imprisoned someone.

If we go even farther, we'll reach a river. The royal capital doesn't border the ocean so much of the marine products sent here come via the river. Günter told me at some point.

I should have brought the map. I laugh at myself for thinking that.

"Even though I live in this town it's like I'm a tourist."

I felt like the air temperature changed when I came near the boundary between the shopping district and residential district. It might have just been that the sunlight weakened, but there are chilly spots mixed in the gentle breeze. It's proof that the waterfront is nearby.

I unfold the blanket I prepared and spread it over his body. Not just over his knees, but also over his chest. It'll be bad if I let him catch a cold.

"Oh hey, isn't that Mr. Gurrier?"

When I look around after someone called out to me, I see a woman with a surprised look on her face. She was a woman much shorter than I am and had a body shape that reminded me of a round and sturdy glass bottle. She seems to be on her way home from shopping and is carrying an oddly packed bag. Her shoulder-length blonde hair was so brownish you could hardly call it blonde anymore.

She didn't have the slightest bit of elegance or beauty, but in exchange she was healthy and had a friendly atmosphere about her. She looked a little bit older than I was which meant that she was probably over ninety. On Earth she'd be the village elder.

When the woman looks at Josak wrapped up in a blanket, she smiles like a mother.

"Oh, he's sound asleep. He must be tired. That's right, the shop is doing well and it gets busy at night. He has to sleep during the day or he'll break down."

"Are you an acquaintance of his?"

"Yeah. I mean, Mr. Gurrier always buys our pressed goat's milk. Yeah, come

come! You have to stop by [4]!"

What exactly is pressed goat's milk...?

My doubts lasted all the way from being half-forced into the house to a white food product on a plate being presented to me. I took a spoonful of the jello-like substance and put it in my mouth. It wasn't that sour. It was somewhere in between yogurt and cheese.

"I see."

"It's good, isn't it? It's made by fermenting goat's milk. It takes a lot of work."

So I have wheeled a wheelchair into a house/commercial kitchen and am having an extravagant snack. She takes the unfinished dish away and this time gives me something that looks like a croquette without breadcrumbs. If I had to say, this one is close to a dessert.

"This one is a test product: fried pressed goat's milk. We tuck the pressed milk into a thin skin so it doesn't melt and fry it."

"It's good, but it must be hard to press and fry milk."

"Well, we can't help that. Because, if we prepare it like this then it's popular even with kids who don't like goat milk, after all." She laughs in the bright kitchen, her eyes narrowing so much they're like threads. "But it's strange. We confidently recommend our pressed goat's milk for breakfast at home, but you wouldn't think that a bar with all men like at Mr. Gurrier's shop would order food like this all that much."

Yogurt certainly doesn't go along with alcohol. But maybe it's used in cocktails or maybe they make the employees eat it for their health. However, the part I couldn't ignore was a few words before that.

Mr. Gurrier's shop.

"Hey, Gurrier, you weren't just working there, you were the owner!?"

"Ohoh, what's this? Was your boss hiding things from you?"

It seems like she didn't have any interest in my explanation that I was a friend, not an employee. She quickly stands up and yells at the door separating the kitchen and the living area.

"Grandpa, Grandpaaaa! Ah, even though I'm saying Grandpa he's actually my dad. The children all call him Grandpa so I end up using that too. Grandpa! Are you awake!?"

"Oh no, you don't have to wake him while he's resting."

She's calling out to her family with her hands around her mouth in a voice that would reverberate all throughout the neighborhood. Even though I hurriedly tried to stop her, I can't just carelessly put my hand on a woman.

"Wait, Ma'am, really. It wouldn't be good for your grandfather's illness if he's woken up forcefully."

"Oh, my dad isn't sleeping because he's sick. He's just a bit older so his afternoon naps are long. I say old, but he's about 120 so he's still healthy. Actually, my dad is originally from human lands so he got old a little quicker. But really, if he knew he was going to stop by, my dad would have forced himself to get up. He'd be so happy that Mr. Gurrier came to visit. He talks about the old days all the time."

"The old days? They've known each other that long?"

"Seems so. I mean, he's always saying how bad the first time Mr. Gurrier crossdressed was."

"Wow, his first time!"

That's an episode I definitely want to hear about. If I get the chance, I'll bring a little gift with me and visit them again. But right now he's sound asleep and it's not something I should get him out of bed to ask him about. I stopped the woman from forcefully waking him up for real this time.

"He's really sound asleep. I'll go check on him."

"No that's okay, Ma'am, it's really okay! After all, Gurrier is sleeping too."

"I guess so."

She finally gave up after remembering her guest's condition. She stopped repeatedly calling her family. Her shoulders droop in disappointment.

"It's really a shame. I wanted to show you how much my dad loves when Mr. Gurrier comes to visit. He didn't have any boys, so he might consider Mr. Gurrier

to be like his son. He says rude things like ‘Everything he has is thanks to me’ and ‘I taught him his job’ – stuff like that. Even though he doesn’t know the first thing about running a high-class bar he’ll kick us out and the two of them will talk all day long.”

“He probably wants to talk about something with just the two of them.”

Or maybe he has something to say that he can only say when there’s just the two of them.

She bends her knees and readjusts the blanket covering the wheelchair as she peers at Josak. And then she stoops down to his level and talks to him with a smile.

“I’m disappointed too. I won’t get a chance to see those blue eyes that cheer up everything they land upon. I’ll deal with it today, but next time please stop by when you’re not so tired.”

Struck with an idea upon hearing the word ‘eyes,’ I take the watercolor out of my breast pocket and spread it out in front of the woman.

“Um, if you want, you can have this to remember he came today.”

The lady of the goat’s milk shop raised her eyebrows as if she just got sucker-punched and compares the picture to me.

“I couldn’t. I really couldn’t take such a splendid painting.”

“Let’s put aside whether it’s splendid or not... Actually, this is a first painting that an amateur studying for 24 hours made so I guess it’s kind of valuable... but if you gave this to your father, I think he might like it too.”

The alien-ish Josak on the paper was smiling with his eyes wide open.

We keep moving south down the paved street.

The sun has sunk significantly and soon people will start making their way home. The people I pass all have a somewhat tired expression and I get the feeling that they’re hurrying back to where they can relax the most.

Pushing the wheelchair had gotten a bit more difficult. It might partly be the fault of the stylish pavement with tinted patterns. It seems they couldn't make smoothness and beauty coexist.

"Or actually, Gurrier, have you gotten heavier? Asking a lady about her weight is taboo, though."

As soon as I said that I tripped on an incline.

"I'm joking, really! It's because of the goat milk stuff. I know, I know."

It's because of the mountain of dairy products we were given as souvenirs and the slightly uphill road. The burden on my arms is much heavier than before.

I check the road and after I carefully get us past the bump I heave a huge sigh and look up.

"... Whoa."

Standing in between the church and the tower across from it, I saw the river running through town. The wavy water's surface was reflecting the evening sunlight and dyed scarlet and because of that, I couldn't see the shore on the other side. It was like an ocean or a lake.

"It's the same color, Gurrier."

It's two blocks away. I quickly check our surroundings and push the handles with all my strength and dash forward. The people following me might panic, but who cares? This is my kingdom and my town. It's not like someone's going to attack me.

I can run the short distance between here and the river without an escort.

The wheelchair shudders and sways. I can feel the shocks the wheels are enduring through my hands to my arms up to my shoulders. Even so I keep running. I run through two intersections. Right after we pass, a group of carriages block the way.

Did my companions give up?

I cross the last big street at once and stop the wheelchair before it crashed into a fence. I stop too. Everything in my field of view was colored by the sunset.

“Like I thought, the same color...”

“Is it really, this color?”

I felt like I had gotten hit with something on the back. Not by something cold, but by a hot whip. Surprised that much, I grip his shoulders. Even if I tried to answer no words come to me.

“Is my hair really this color?”

Now my voice won’t come out. I finally got my startled hands to move and I pet his shoulders like I was scrubbing them. I idiotically petted them over and over. I couldn’t do anything but that.

“Gu... rrer, why... until now...”

“Well,” Josak leaned his head back with a light groan to look at me in a posture as if he were gazing at the sky. They’re the movements of a patient who has finally regained consciousness, but they also looked like he just had stiff shoulders. “Young Master said to be quiet and come along for the ride so a stayed really quiet. I was a good little guest, wasn’t I?”

“You were too quiet!”

It’s been a while since I’ve heard him laugh. It’s been even longer since I’ve seen his whole face light up in a smile.

“You know, I wanted to wake up somewhere where it was just the two of us.”

Getting petted might have been irritating because Josak lifts his hands out from under the blanket and grabs mine that were on his shoulders. They were as warm as they were before.

“I’ve wanted to say something to you for a while.”

I had an idea about what he was going to say so before he could I tried to move. I want to move in front of the wheelchair and look him properly in the face and say something before I’m apologized to. However, the grip on my fingers was stronger than I thought and I failed at pulling away. As a result, I can only bury my face in his shoulder and whisper.

“... Welcome home, Josak.”

I've been waiting.

References[edit]

1. ↑ The original product type name and abbreviation was 'ee janai ka, kore de?' --> eko. This means, 'It's fine like it is, isn't it?' and 'eko' is the Katakana English abbreviation for 'ecological' which is what they call green products in Japanese.
2. ↑ This is a note about how Gurrier was written when Yuuri said it. Yuuri said 'gurie-chan' which wouldn't be strange except for the fact that the katakana 'e' was replaced with a kanji character グリエ ---> グリ江 This doesn't change the pronunciation at all, but there is a sort of playful hint to writing it like this. Coupled with the fact that, excluding children, you really only use 'chan' for women and the response Yuuri imagined from Josak used the feminine pronoun for 'I' (atashi), my guess is this might be a nickname Yuuri made up for Josak in drag or just to tease him later on in the series because I know they become better friends. Just a guess, though~
3. ↑ The product is a parody of the full name of the dog Hachiko --> Chuuken Hachikou or Faithful Dog Hachiko. There is a famous statue of Hachiko in front of Shibuya station that you have to almost fight people to get a chance to take your picture with.... I've never gotten a picture with it XD Anyway, Hachiko's story is kind of really sad. The dog would wait at Shibuya station for his owner, Professor Ueno of The University of Tokyo, to come home from work and the two of them would then go home together. After the Professor died and didn't come home one day, Hachiko continued to go to the station every day when the Professor's train came in for the next nine years until he died in 1935 of cancer and worms.

4. ↑ Pressed milk (yosechichi) is an ecchi otaku term that refers to when girls have something pressing against their breasts, usually pushing them together, like if their arms are tightly crossed. The things I learn translating this stuff XD